



Audubon CONNECTICUT

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**TESTIMONY OF AUDUBON CONNECTICUT
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**GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING**

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Audubon Connecticut, a part of the National Audubon Society with more than 10,000 members statewide, works to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats using education, science and conservation, and legislative advocacy for the benefit of people and the earth's biological diversity. Through our network of community-based nature centers, protected wildlife sanctuaries, and local volunteer Chapters, we seek to connect people with nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists.

**IN OPPOSITION TO H.B. No. 6375 AN ACT CONCERNING REVIEW AND
TERMINATION OF CERTAIN BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS.**

Chairman Slossberg, Chairman Spallone and members of the GAE Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. Audubon Connecticut **strongly opposes H.B. 6375, AAC Review and Termination of Certain Boards and Commissions** Section 1 (42) that seeks to eliminate the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council.

Invasive species, including invasive plants, are second only to development in the threat they pose to Connecticut's native habitat. Forty-two percent (42%) of threatened and endangered species in the U.S. have suffered declines due to competition from nonnative invaders. The economic costs incurred because of nonnative species reach **billions** of dollars in this country each year.

Established in 2003, the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council has made substantial progress in identifying and listing plants that are invasive or potentially invasive, and the General Assembly has acted promptly to ban these plants, but there is still much more to be done. The Council brings together agency experts, academic researchers, nursery industry representatives and nonprofit land conservation organizations in a joint effort to address this threat to our state's natural landscape and wildlife.

The habitat destruction wrought by invasive plant species is of great concern to all conservation agencies and organizations that own and manage open space lands. Organizations such as Audubon spend countless hours of staff and volunteer time working to eradicate invasive plant species from our properties, at the same time many of these species are still being sold at the local nursery. Without the ongoing dialogue afforded by the Invasive Plants Council, stakeholders will be forced to fall back into the adversarial stance that existed prior to creation of the Council.

Recent research conducted by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station – itself a member of the Invasive Plants Council – provides yet another reason to support prompt action to reduce invasive plants species, in particular Japanese barberry. This tough, thorny shrub is widespread through many of our forests where it quickly comes to dominate the understory crowding out native plants and shrubs that provide food and shelter for numerous species of wildlife.

According to the researchers at the Agricultural Experiment Station, however, there is one species of animal that flourishes in thick patches of barberry: the white-footed mouse, the host species for the black-legged tick that carries Lyme Disease (J. Ward, personal communication). In light of this information, developing public policy and on-the-ground management strategies to reduce the incidence and prevalence of Japanese barberry is no longer just a habitat or wildlife issue; it is a public health issue as well. Successfully combating this alien invader could help to reduce the incidence and prevalence of Lyme Disease in Connecticut.

We urge the Committee to reject *H.B. 6375 Section 1 (42)* and allow the Invasive Plants Council to continue its work. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important matter today.